The Railroad Man's Magazine, **October 1909**

CAMPBELL'S WEDDING RACE.

BY HARRY BEDWELL.

"Extra, 1127" Does Some Stunts Trying to Reach Junction City in Time to Hear the Joy Bells Ring.

CAMPBELL, who had for some time been standing by the window, knocking holes in the cupboard with short, vicious kicks, turned from his scrutiny of the unpainted roofs of the little town that nestled under the sage-brush hill, and addressed himself to the first trick despatcher, who sat at a table near the other window.

"I'd like to know what a fellow in my fix can do," he complained. "What would you do?" he asked hopelessly.

Racey, the first trick man, completed an order before answering.

"How do I know what I should do?" he said languidly. "I've never been in such a fix, you know, and I couldn't advise you. Anyhow, you wouldn't take advice if I'd give it."

Campbell turned back to the window, and began kicking holes in the cupboard again, his rough, heavy shoes making the wood and paper yield easily to the blows.

"Better cut it out," advised Racey dispassionately. "The chief will come in here and fall all over you. if you don't."

Campbell gave another kick. "I wish some one would try it," he said.

Racey glanced at the big, broad shoulders, and shook his head. "I don't," he remarked "not in here."

As could easily be seen from his expression and tone of voice, Campbell was mad — not angry.

For this was his wedding-day. His bride-elect was one hundred miles away, and he had no way of reaching her. All arrangements had long ago been made for him to wed Nellie McDonald that evening at eight o'clock, but it was now 12.30 p.m., and he was far from his heart's desire.

Mechanically he took out his watch and ran his thumb over its face as he counted the exact time there was left.

"I could make it by a scratch, if they'd only give me a chance," he muttered to himself.

Campbell was an extra passenger engineer. The day before, in Junction City, he had asked for a two weeks' layoff, that he might marry and take a trip to the city. But they were short of passenger engineers at the time, and the trainmaster had all but gone on his knees to Campbell, begging him to take a train to Farnham, promising him that he would get him back to Junction City in time to marry that night.

But this trainmaster had not counted on No. 9 trying to knock Little Squaw Mountain off the map. No. 9's sharp nose went about two feet into the side of Little Squaw, and then stopped. When the smoke cleared away it was found that the engine and three cars were off the track, and about one hundred yards of track torn up. This, of course, blocked traffic for some time.

That morning Campbell came down to the despatcher's office and demanded, in no

gentle tone, why he had not been called to go out. On learning of the antics of No. 9, and the verdict of the despatcher that the track could not be repaired and the wreck cleared away until some time in the afternoon, Campbell came very near choking the despatcher.

Then he deluged the Junction City telegraph-office with messages to Nellie, until that young lady knew not whether Campbell was killed in the wreck or merely behind it and unable to get by. Her father, who was master mechanic at Junction City, had pointed out the fact that Campbell could not be dead and send so many messages, which seemed logical enough to the girl, and relieved her greatly.

Campbell paced the despatcher's office all morning in a rage. For there had been no trains out going to Junction City, and he watched from a distance the hour set for his wedding.

The chief now came out of his office and leaned over the train-sheet.

"How are they getting along out at the wreck?" he inquired of Racey.

"They've got a track built almost around it," answered the trick man, "and trains will begin to move some time this afternoon."

"Suppose we had better call a crew for that extra east," mused the chief, with his eyes still on the train-sheet. "They ought to be ready for her by the time she gets there. Who's next up?"

Campbell swung round suddenly.

"I am," he cried, joy and relief showing in his voice. "Call me for that extra east."

"I wish you would quit bothering me, Campbell," he complained. "That wedding of yours can wait. You're a passenger engineer, and not running freights. You make me —”

In two strides Campbell crossed the room, gripped the chief by the collar of his shirt, swung him clear of the floor, and spun him around like a top.

"You call me to take that freight train out!"

Campbell's voice was about as gentle as his grip. "I'm an extra passenger engineer, and you've got to call me for that train if I say so."

The chief gave a grunt as his feet touched the floor, and he glared up at Campbell for a few moments, choking with wrath.

"Take the freight train out, and see if I care," he spluttered, and stalked from the room.

Campbell turned and leaned over Racey threateningly.

"I'm going to take that freight train to Junction City quicker than any freight train has ever gone there since this plug of a road was built," he growled, "and if you lay me out any, there'll be a man short and a job over in this office when I get back."

He turned, stamped to the door and down the stairs.

Campbell cornered the call-boy in the baggage-room.

"They want you to call a crew, quick!" he said. "I'm going to take the train out, and if you get the rest of 'em around here within half an hour, I'll buy you enough cigarettes to kill you in a month."

Campbell strode down into the yard, where the switch-crew was slowly making up the train. He knew better than to try to order these men about, so he swallowed his impatience and called to them cheerily:

"'Get a move on you, fellows, and there'll be a keg of something cold in Mother Monohan's woodshed some of these nights with my card over the stopper."

The switchmen winked at the engineer and grinned. But the engine suddenly took on new life.

Campbell disappeared inside the roundhouse, where he found some lazy hostlers trying

languidly to make steam in one of the big freight-engines.

"Oh, the dickens!" he groaned, as he viewed the big boiler set on little wheels, looking so top-heavy that it might fall over at any moment. "I forgot I'd have to take a 'leven-hundred engine on a freight-train," he muttered.

He climbed into the cab, and, snatching the shovel from the perspiring hostler, pushed him to one side, and cried:

"Get out of here, you farmer!"

The hostler slid from the cab and collapsed in a surprised heap on a pile of hot ashes, only to spring to his feet again with a muttered curse as he sat down in a tub of water to put out the fire that was eating holes in his overalls.

The conductor came out of the freight office with a handful of bills, and began checking off the car numbers on his train-book as he walked slowly down the long train.

Campbell backed the big engine down onto the string of cars, and a brakeman made the coupling and connected the air.

Campbell slid from the cab and looked over his engine in feverish haste. Then, seeing the conductor sauntering lazily down the length of the train, he rushed at him with an angry roar.

"Do you think you've got a week to make this trip?" he cried. "Didn't you know I was in a hurry?"

The conductor looked up into the excited face of the big engineer with languid eyes, and then continued checking off the car numbers without saying a word. But he increased his speed perceptibly, for he knew that to anger Campbell further would mean almost certain destruction.

When they had reached the end of the train, the conductor closed his book, with the way-bills folded carefully inside, and remarked carelessly:

"Better get the orders, hadn't we?"

They crossed the yards and climbed the stairs to the despatcher’s office. Racey tore off the tissue orders and handed a copy to each. The two took the orders with all due reverence, and the conductor read them over aloud.

"Now, Campbell," said Racey coolly, "I don't want you tearing up the track with any of your phenomenal runs. We've got one eleven-hundred engine in the ditch now, and it will take two derricks to get her out."

"Who are you?" snapped Campbell. "I don't see your name on the time-card. Anyway, how do you expect me to get to Junction City with that drag? You've put three hundred tons more on that train than the rating calls for."

"Oh," jeered Racey, "did you think this was a pleasure trip? Well, it's not; so you run along like a good fellow!"

It looked for a few moments as though Campbell was going to do personal harm to the despatcher, but at last he turned, and, muttering something under his breath, stamped heavily from the room, across the yards, and into the cab.

He tested the air, whistled "out-of-town" and, as the conductor gave a languid signal, he started the train with a vicious jerk that made the little caboose at the rear end bounce and bob like a rubber ball.

Campbell glanced back over the long train with a feeling of exaltation, then suddenly shut off the steam with a curse and a yell as the air-brakes clamped the wheels. In starting he had pulled out a coupling, and the train had parted.

He jumped to the ground and rushed back to see what had happened. There on the

ground lay the draw-bar, and a big hole in the car showed that the car could not be taken along.

The conductor came forward and glared malevolently at Campbell.

"Now, you see what you've done, you hoghead!" he cried angrily.

"We'll have to kick her in the bad-order spur, and leave her," said Campbell, as he turned on his heel and strode toward his engine.

Quickly the disabled car was switched out, the train coupled up, and this time the start was made with more caution. As they rattled over the last switch and swung out into the open country, Campbell glanced at his watch.

"Accident number one," he muttered; "and it's one-forty-five. We'll have to ramble some if we get there in time. Anyhow, that car makes us lighter. Budd," he called to the fireman, "this is my wedding march, and I'm going to make it a record-breaker!"

The engine rocked and reeled as the train gathered speed. The fireman's eyes opened wider and wider as the speed increased. At the end of the first few miles they were sticking far out of his head. When he could stand it no longer, he slid carefully from his seat and made his way over to the engineer's side. He clutched Campbell by the sleeve and shouted hoarsely in his ear:

"For Heaven's sake, man, don't you know this is a 'leven-hundred engine, and that it will fall over on you if you don't slow down?"

Campbell drew in his head, gave the fireman one withering look, choked a little with anger, and then thrust his head out of the window without saying a word.

The fireman, still muttering to himself, slid down into the gangway. Bracing himself, he took up a shovelful of coal, swung open the fire-box door, and threw the coal at the blazing furnace with all his might. But just as he threw it, the door seemed to dodge to one side, and the coal went high over the boilerhead, deluging the engineer.

Campbell took his eyes off of the track long enough to give the astonished fireman another withering look, then thrust his head out of the window again.

Overcome with surprise, the fireman sank down upon the coal, and gaped at the open furnace door. At last he arose, took up another shovelful of coal, and braced himself for another try. He was not to be fooled again, so he waited until he was sure of his mark, then heaved the coal at the fire-box with all his might.

But this time he more than half expected to see the door dodge him again. When it did not, he was taken by surprise, and let the shovel go in the furnace with the coal.

Not sure just what had happened, he stood for some time gazing at his empty hands vacantly, then at the roaring fire. When he did comprehend the dread truth, most of his shovel had by that time gone curling out of the smoke-stack.

Again he clutched at the engineer's sleeve, and this time his face was white with horror.

"I've thrown the shovel into the firebox!" he shouted in Campbell's ear.

Campbell turned, and this time there was the ghost of a grim smile curling his lips as mechanically he reached for his watch.

"Accident number two," he said, and his eyes focused on the track ahead. "And the wedding march has just started. Let the band play on!"

The fireman stumbled back into the gangway with white, scared face. There was but one thing to do now, and he set to work at once throwing coal into the fire-box with his hands. There was not another shovel on the train that he knew of, and he had no chance to get one until they reached the first stop. It was a hard task, but there was no help for it.

The train rushed on at maddening speed, taking the hills with a rush and seeming to fall

down on the other side.

A brakeman started forward over the top of the train. He gave up before he had crossed the first car, and crawled back. The little caboose seemed to be trying to do four or five things at once, but it was a safer place than on top of the box cars.

Every few minutes the white-faced conductor swore that they were off the track, but the speed increased rather than slackened.

"I'll pay him up for this when we get to Little Grade," muttered the conductor once when the caboose stayed in the air longer than usual.

The fireman still toiled at throwing coal into the furnace, but he had to keep the door open so much of the time that it was doubly hard to keep up steam.

But the engineer opened the throttle wider.

The blind sidings and the telegraph-offices flew by in quick succession, and at all points there was a clear signal.

They were out of the hills now, and the desert was before them, where the track was straight and level. There were no trains to meet, as none had cleared the wreck.

The speed seemed to increase. The miles were reeled off in quick succession. The fireman became almost frantic with the heat and his cramped position. But Campbell sat immovable on his seat, his eyes ever on the track ahead. Mercilessly he kept the throttle open wide.

The afternoon shadows were beginning to lengthen when at length they pulled into Little Grade, and half of the journey was behind them. Here they would take on coal and water and get their new orders to proceed.

Campbell brought the engine to a standstill at the coal-chute with a master hand. The fireman climbed wearily to the top of the tender and let down the door of one of the chutes. There was a rush of coal, but it only half-filled the tender.

"What's the matter with you dagos up there?" called the fireman with some heat. "Why haven't you got this chute full of coal?"

"Gotta no coal up here," came the answer. "No eng' to putta it up."

Campbell moved the engine up to the next chute, and this time the coal deluged the tender and cab.

The fireman climbed into the chute, picked up a shovel, and threw it onto the tender. The Italian boss looked wickedly at him as he climbed back into the cab, but the fireman cared little so long as he had the prized shovel.

"I'll go back and get the orders," said Campbell as he jumped to the ground.

Half-way to the depot he spied the trainmen entering the lunch-counter of the company hotel.

"Hey, there, you hay-pitchers!" he called after them angrily. "Where do you think you are going? We're only two hours and a half out of a division-point. Why didn't you eat before you started?"

"We didn't have time," the conductor answered. "We were called on short notice, you know."

Campbell ground his teeth, and strode angrily into the telegraph-office, to meet with another shock. "You fellows will have to put up coal," the operator said blandly.

In one bound Campbell cleared the counter that separated him from the office, and he gripped the operator by the shoulder.

"Who says to put up coal?" he demanded hoarsely.

"Why — why, the despatcher," said the operator, wriggling with pain. "Yours is the

first engine in here since the coal ran low, and there'll be a big delay to the already delayed trains if they come down here in a bunch from the wreck and find there's no coal."

"Tell him," bellowed Campbell. "that we have a 'leven-hundred engine, and can't go onto the chute."

"He says," grimaced the operator. "that you can leave enough cars between the engine and the cars you put up to keep the engine off of the chute."

Campbell hesitated for a moment then turned on his heel, vaulted the counter, and ran down the track to his engine.

The engine watchman had by this time cleaned the ash-pan of the engine, and was seated in the cab listening to the excited fireman's account of their record-breaking run.

Campbell choked down his wrath, and when he addressed these two his voice was as low and as sweet as he could make it.

"Boys," he began, "there's got to be some coal put up, and the train-crew has gone to eat." His voice faltered a little here, but he went on bravely. "We three can put it up, if you fellows will act as my brakemen; and, if you will, I'll give you four bits apiece."

The fireman and the engine watchman gaped in astonishment at the liberal offer, and eagerly accepted. They clambered back over the train, cut off six cars back of the engine, and Campbell ran down to the coal-spur, where his acting brakemen, coupled on five cars of coal.

They backed up the chute, coupled on the five empty cars that were on the incline, and shoved them in on a siding. Again, they backed up to the chute, this time with greater speed, and the cars of coal mounted the incline to the shed.

Campbell was hot with anger because the trainmen had taken advantage of him, and he did not observe his usual caution while putting up the coal. The cars mounted more swiftly than he supposed, and the last one was just entering the shed before he slackened speed.

Then his two brakemen came racing out of the shed over the cars, waving frantically for him to stop. He applied the air, but his helpers had neglected to connect it, and, before he could stop, two cars of coal plunged over the other end of the chute and flattened out on the ground thirty feet below.

The Italian coal-heavers tumbled out of the shed and scattered in every direction.

A grim smile showed plainly on Campbell's face as he released the engine and shot down to the level track.

The fireman opened the switch, and Campbell backed down to the train. He plucked out his watch and studied it intently.

"Four-thirty," he muttered," and delay number three. The worst half of the wedding march is yet to come!"

In motion once more! The last half of the journey! This time the fireman had the shovel tied to his wrist, for he was determined not to be tricked into losing it again.

There were a few miles of level track before they came into the mountains, and they took them with a rush. By the time they struck the heavy grades the flues were leaking badly, and the steam-gage showed a gradual lessening of pressure. At last Campbell drew the throttle wide open, and turned to the fireman savagely.

"Can't you keep her hot?" he roared.

"You're working her too hard," complained the fireman. "The flues are leaking."

Campbell slid down from his seat and peered into the fire-box. Water was dripping down onto the fire in many places.

"Great Scott!" growled the engineer. "I wish I had some bran."

"I think," said the fireman, "that the car next to the head one is loaded with bran. I saw the advertisement on the side of the car; but you can't get it, going at this rate."

Campbell gripped the fireman by the arm until he wriggled.

"Get up there on my seat," he ordered, "and run her till I come back. Don't you dare slow down, unless it's around a curve!"

He turned and climbed swiftly over the coal, wabbled across the first car, and disappeared between it and the next.

The fireman shuddered, then turned his eyes resolutely to the track ahead.

Campbell slid part way down the brake-rod between the rocking, swaying cars, and balanced himself on the only step within reach. The end door of the car was sealed with a tin seal and cleated at the end.

He gripped the seal and tore it loose with one jerk. Then, half braced, half balanced, he kicked straight down at the cleat with all his might.

He knew that to miss it once would probably overbalance him and send him down to certain death; so each kick was well aimed. Four times he struck straight down with all his might before the cleat gave way and dropped to the track beneath.

He stopped to breathe a moment; then, leaning far down, holding only by one hand, he seized the catch of the door and pulled it open.

Just as he did so, the cars swayed apart in opposite directions and wrenched loose his hold. He balanced dizzily on the step a moment, then swung downward. A sickening feeling tore at his vitals; but, with a catlike turn, he managed to light feet foremost on the bumpers, where he clung for some time to regain his lost breath and quiet his nerves.

Sacks of bran filled the open car door, and he ripped one open with his knife. A stream of bran followed; and, taking off his jacket, he made a bag of it. Holding it under the stream of bran until it was full, he bound it tightly with the sleeves.

Three feet below, death nipped at his heels — but he was not thinking of that. He was growing a little vague as to why he was running all these risks to make time, but his determination was still the same.

Closing the car door, and taking the bran in his teeth, he swung out to the side of the car, and climbed to the top. He wabbled across the length of it again, over the coal, and into the cab.

Soon he was pouring bran into the boiler. This stopped the leaking somewhat, and the needle on the steam-gage began to climb round to its accustomed place.

But now they were nearing the scene of the wreck, and were compelled to take the siding to wait until the liberated trains passed.

There was an agonizing delay of twenty minutes before the first train came in sight, and Campbell put in the time pacing up and down the track, muttering ineffectual curses at the waste of time.

Then there was another wait of fifteen minutes before all the trains were clear, and by that time Campbell was nearly mad with impatience.

He rushed out of the siding at great speed when he was liberated, and came very near leaving behind the brakeman who closed the switch.

Out in the open again, Campbell's loud-mouthed impatience gave way to silent, grim determination.

By this time the train-crew was getting a little used to fast running. Campbell's reckless pace did not frighten them so much as before.

He slackened speed not at all now, swinging around curves at a rate that took away the

breath, while the downgrades seemed naught but a straight, dizzy drop.

Only when they came to the scene of the wreck did he slacken speed at all, and even here he exceeded the speed limit to such an extent that the section men standing near the track moved away to a safe distance as the cars swung by.

Darkness settled down at six o'clock. There was no moon. The headlight, which the fireman had lighted while they were at Little Grade, was burning badly, and threatened to go out entirely.

But there was no stopping to repair it.

One of the brakemen, who had taken one drink too many at Little Grade, now climbed out of the caboose and over the top of the train to a seat on a brake-wheel, his lantern proclaiming his presence.

Campbell did not see this man for some time — not until they had passed the last telegraph-office before entering Junction City. Happening to glance back, he saw the lantern suddenly shoot high in the air, drop to one side of the track, and go out.

At about the same instant there was a jar of tightening air-brakes, and the engineer was thrown through the cab window. He turned over two or three times in his flight through the air, and lit on the loose soil at the side of the track.

He lay quiet for a few moments, partly stunned, then sat up and looked about wonderingly. He saw the engine a few rods ahead of him, standing quite still. Farther along he could dimly see a break in the train, and a dark mass at the side of the right of way, which he thought must be derailed cars.

Painfully he got to his seat and hobbled toward the rear of the train. He did not seem badly hurt — merely scratched and bruised and stunned. He remembered having such a tight grip on the window it was closed before his hand was wrenched loose.

Lights appeared toward the end of the train as some of the trainmen came running forward. Campbell hobbled toward them, but was stopped by the overturned box cars. There appeared to be quite a number of them, and he sat down on the trucks of one, swearing fluently at the darkness and wondering where the fireman was.

He had forgotten the brakeman whose lantern he had seen go over with the wrecked box cars, but he remembered him now as he heard a groan from somewhere out in the darkness to the left.

The conductor and one brakeman came in sight and flashed their lanterns on the wreck. At sight of Campbell, both began to swear softly in awed tones, as though looking on a ghost.

"How did you get here?" asked the conductor at length.

"I fell out," confessed Campbell. "How many cars are off the track?"

"About five or six," answered the conductor. "Where's my head brakeman?"

Another groan from the darkness answered his question, and all started in the direction of the sound. They came upon the brakeman stretched out on his back in the sand. He sat up and blinked at the light as the men came up.

"Give me just one more drink," he begged, looking around in a puzzled sort of way. "What's happened?" he asked, after a pause. "Am I drunk, or dreaming? Or am I dead?"

"You've just had your toes over the ragged edge," said the conductor. "This rapid-fire-gun of an engineer has put us in the ditch and near killed us all. How do you feel?"

The brakeman felt his left shoulder tenderly.

"My wing's broke," he declared, and scrambled to his feet.

They walked around the wreck, counting the derailed cars.

"I count five off the track," said the conductor, as they completed the circle. "Three cars more, and the caboose would have gone," he added.

On the track they found the fireman, white-faced and very nervous, looking over the torn-up track by the light of a torch.

"Five rail lengths of track torn up," he announced as the others came up. "Is that you, Campbell?" he asked. "I thought you'd quit the job, by the way you left the cab."

"Well, this means trouble for some one," said the conductor, looking hard at Campbell.

The big engineer straightened.

"I'm going to take what's left of this train to Junction City now," he declared. "There's no telegraph-office between here and the Junction, so I'll run along in and head the wrecker out to you. Better put out your lights right away," he cautioned as he hobbled toward his engine, followed by the fireman.

"If you're not careful, this wedding march will be turned into a funeral procession," warned the fireman as they climbed into the cab.

But Campbell only gritted his teeth and opened the throttle.

The fireman plucked at his sleeve as the engine started.

"You'll have to hurry, or we won't make it," he called. "The flues are leaking again."

"Oh, we'll hurry, all right!"

As the engine forged ahead, Campbell glanced at his watch.

"Seven-twenty," he announced. "I'll have to hurry this wedding march along a bit, or it'll be late. This is accident number four. I wonder will there be any more?"

Slowly the remnant of "Extra, 1127" pulled into Junction City and came to a stop before the yard office. The engine was leaking badly again, making a puddle of water beneath her as she came to a standstill. The needle of the steam-gage showed there was but little steam, and this was fast decreasing.

Campbell climbed stiffly from the cab and made his way toward the open door of the yard office, where McDonald, master mechanic, and father of Nellie, stood looking critically at the engine.

Campbell was begrimed with coal dust; his face was streaked with blood, and over all there was a liberal coat of bran.

"You've played the dickens with that engine!" growled McDonald, as Campbell came up. "Look at her!" he cried. "She's leaking so fast she'll be dead before we can get her into the shops."

"Shut up!" snapped Campbell in a choked voice. "Call the wrecker," he ordered, "and get 'em out right away. I put five cars of merchandise into the ditch at Mile-Post 438. Where's Nellie?" he asked.

"Why — why, is that you, Campbell?" gasped McDonald. "I thought you were tied up in Farnham."

"Where's Nellie?" repeated Campbell doggedly.

"Nellie? Why, she — why, you wired that you couldn't get out of Farnham, and I think Nellie announced to her friends that the wedding was postponed for a little time. I think she went to the theater with Willis Garvin this evening. Why didn't you wire us when you started?" he asked in great excitement.

"I forgot," said Campbell weakly, as he sank upon the step.

Mechanically his hand sought his watch-pocket.

"Seven-fifty-seven," he murmured. "This is accident number five."

Suddenly he got to his feet.

"After you've called the wrecker," he said in low, decided tones, "you just hike home as quick as those legs of yours will carry you, and get ready for the wedding. Take the parson with you as you go by.

"I'm going down to the theater and get Nellie, if I have to storm the place. I'm also going to marry her to-night, or turn this town upside down. Now, hurry!" he added, and strode off toward the lights of Main Street with a step which had suddenly lost its limp.

McDonald gazed after his future son-in-law for a few moments in silence.

"Well," he muttered at length, "he's the limit." **Ω**